

Minutes of Government Labs Steering Committee  
July 26, 2000  
1:00 PM  
SFWMD Storch Room

**Attendees:**

David M Struve	SFWMD
George Riley	BCDEP
Mark Rials	SFWMD
Rudolf Jaffe	FIU
Ed Gancher	DERM
David Hanson	Pinellas County
Tim Fitzpatrick	DEP
Maxine Cheesman	SFWMD
Bahram Charkhian	SFWMD
Dee Azeredo	SFWMD
Connie Geller	USGS

By phone:

Mike Paige	FDOA
Jim Evans	FDOH

**Finalization of charter:** The charter was adopted as written. It now reads:

"The purpose of the Steering Committee is to design an integrated and efficient system of Statewide Environmental Laboratories that will lead to the greatest value while simultaneously ensuring highest quality laboratory analyses and timely accomplishment of state environmental monitoring needs."

**Discussion Topic "Ideal Integrated Statewide Environmental Laboratory System"**

Maxine Cheesman started off the discussion of an ideal system for a statewide laboratory system. What are the ideas that we have and which labs should be included?

Ed Gancher said that one option is to consider an integrated system of state agency labs, but county lab inclusion does not seem reasonable. Therefore we should not include county labs in this plan.

Tim Fitzpatrick suggested we consider the workload for the larger labs and efficiencies to combine them. Also need to look at "farming out" portions of the work that could be done privately or using enterprise model and "contacted manpower" to staff a state managed lab.

Rudolf Jaffe asked if part of goal is to utilize available capacities through central resource.

Mark Rials asked if we need a performance-based system to integrate laboratories?

George Riley asked if PBMS cover this problem? After much discussion, it was decided that this would be more appropriately handled at the Short-term committee.

David Hanson said his county would be interested in "loose affiliation" to better use county capacity.

Tim Fitzpatrick suggested that maybe a statewide system might not be the preferred approach. DEP lab design is not only for pure analytical services but staff also provides support to the agency for technical issues.

Maxine Cheesman asked if given the list of government labs aren't there more labs than are needed? Aren't there too many and is the taxpayer getting a good deal?

David Hanson said some labs are needed locally for things like biological analyses.

Maxine Cheesman stated that some labs started for local need and have expanded capabilities that should have been directed elsewhere. After more discussion, there was agreement that there were probably more labs in the state than needed.

Ed Gancher stated we should design a system that is based on the need's of the state by accumulating workload, and then design the system to handle it.

Dave Struve asked how does the customer get flexibility in terms of growth in a centralized system?

Maxine Cheesman said that as long as the system is designed correctly this shouldn't be a problem.

Tim Fitzpatrick said the Florida Oceanographic Institute has advisory board – this sort of model would work for the state lab system.

Rudolf Jaffe said the system would not have to require central control and would have flexibility.

The group reviewed the labs on the original list and continued the discussion on whether or not to include county labs. It was agreed that county labs should be considered initially. In following discussions on trying to identify a model for a centralized system, Connie Geller was asked to describe how the USGS labs operated.

Connie said the USGS has two labs one in Denver one in Ocala. Lab in Denver has 200 staff. Work has never exceeded capacity. Those analyses that cannot be done in Ocala are done in Denver. Lab does not have a fixed budget. Depends on projects for funding from billed testing.

Mark Rials said that maybe the USGS budget model might be the best for the statewide system.

However, Connie Geller said the workload has been decreasing and USGS has been looking for customers.

Maxine Cheesman said that the USGS has also turned down work for some SFWMD projects.

Tim Fitzpatrick asked how about combining water management district labs?

Mark Rials said there would be logistical problems with combining SFWMD and SWFWMD.

Tim Fitzpatrick said when DEP consolidated operations they saw large gains in efficiency because the labs were small and specialized for a particular area.

Maxine Cheesman said we must consider all things carefully. She also asked what is the ideal structure for the state system?

Tim Fitzpatrick suggested that the central lab is best approach. There was further discussion on centralized approach.

Rudolf Jaffee said consolidation does not require physical movement of laboratories.

Maxine Cheesman said that specialization of task like nutrients, organics, metals might be an approach.

Rudolf Jaffee: Skills can be used for analyte specific tasks when consolidating. For example someone who is familiar with the determination of volatiles can be used for mercury analysis.

Maxine Cheesman asked if utilities were doing non-mission activities like environmental monitoring?

David Hanson said the Utilities are a bit different – they do specific projects (corrosion studies etc) and also do environmental and compliance work.

Ed Gancher said in Miami the utilities also have a mixture of missions, some process control, some environmental and some compliance.

Maxine Cheesman said that maybe one option to consider is to have the various labs limit what they are doing to what their mission requires.

Tim Fitzpatrick talked about the DEP lab budgets being a lot like a commercial lab.

There was then a discussion of models for a statewide system. The models identified were:

(1) Central Lab, (2) Two labs (north and south), (3) Integrated system (4) No consolidation of physical facility but focus on special areas (5) Consolidate where it makes sense and create centers of “specialization”

There was then a discussion of how these ideas could be developed into a proposal. Dave Struve suggested creating a “Statement of Work” that has background, deliverables and a timetable for completion to study these options.

General concerns raised on developing the proposal included:

- 1) Should we be creating a proposal to destroy our current laboratory system?
- 2) Do we need to break out by state, county and city?
- 3) Do we need to include the university system?
- 4) What level of detail?
- 5) Need to separate process control from environmental monitoring.
- 6) Regulatory issues may preclude consolidation. Do they fit into this kind of model
- 7) Where does the USGS fit? As overflow lab?
- 8) How will the political boundaries be dealt with?
- 9) How do we ensure that state labs all comply with a standard set of rules? Same methods, quality etc.
- 10) How do we handle requirements for compliance and strict environmental monitoring?
- 11) Should we limit this to state labs only?

Mike Page asked if we were a private company buying up these labs we would consolidate. If we were a department of laboratories what would we do? We would have to define process monitoring and environmental monitoring. It is these differences that created the barriers between us.

Maxine Cheesman asked if we thought a consultant should be hired to develop the proposal. All participants said no, this was the best group to do this task.

David Struve asked if we should have clear direction from the state before we develop the proposal?

Maxine Cheesman replied that she was going to ask for further direction from the SFWMD Governing Board on Aug 9<sup>th</sup> in her presentation.

Ed Gancher asked how many state labs there were? Tim Fitzpatrick replied that there were about 12, DEP, DOH, Water Management districts and a few small DEP and DOH labs.

Ed Gancher asked if the proposal was just to eliminate small labs?

Tim Fitzpatrick replied that it just means consolidation of smaller less efficient groups.

Dave Struve asked if that consolidation would allow us to handle the excess workload without additional resources?

Tim Fitzpatrick replied that it would probably handle at least one third of it.

Maxine Cheesman asked the participants to listen in to the Board meeting on 8/9/00 at 9:00 am and adjourned the meeting.

**Next meeting** scheduled for August 17 at SWFWMD conference room in Brooksville 1:00PM. Conference calling will be set up for those that wish to call in.

***Update: The next meeting will be postponed and rescheduled at a later date. At the 8/9 Board meeting, it was decided that a District Board member would meet with the DEP to define areas of responsibility between the District and DEP for this project.***